

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENT

This Amendment amends Claims 1, 6, 9, 14, 20 and 24. Support for the amendments is found in the specification and claims as originally filed. In particular, support is found in the specification at least as reproduced below:

Based on the finding described above, the present invention aims to reduce the amount of coarse carbides, which cause to damages of type 4, remaining in former austenite ( $\gamma$ ) grain boundaries of a welded component (base metal). With the invention, the creep lifetime of the weld zone of the heat-resisting steel can be significantly improved. More specifically, before the base metal is welded, it is subjected to normalizing once or more times, thereby reducing the amount of coarse carbides. Specification at least at page 10, lines 13-22.

No new matter would be introduced by entry of these amendments.

Upon entry of these amendments, Claims 1-29 will be pending in this application.

Claims 1, 6, 9, 14, 20 and 24 are independent.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Applicants respectfully request entry of the foregoing and reexamination and reconsideration of the application, as amended, in light of the remarks that follow.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended to their representative during the interview on January 23, 2007. Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication during the interview that the above amendments appear to overcome the outstanding formal and prior art rejections.

As discussed at the personal interview, the present invention provides a long-life heat-resistant low alloy steel welded component that does not easily cause creep damage of type 4 in a heat-affected zone of the welded component. Specification at page 5, lines 2-4; page 2, line 26 to page 3, line 11. Normalizing one or more times before welding limits at former austenite grain boundaries of the welded component coarse carbides that cause creep damage of type 4. Specification at page 10, lines 13-22.

Claims 1-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over EPA 1 143 026 A1 ("EP-026"). The Final Rejection states:

10. Rejection over EP 1143026 is reinstated since the claims may be interpreted to no longer require that the **coarse carbides** that are to be lessened by normalizing are those **that cause type 4 creep damage** as was argued by applicant in applicant's response of 31 May 2006. Final Rejection at page 3, section 10 (emphasis added).

Independent Claims 1, 6, 9, 14, 20 and 24 are amended to require that the **coarse carbides** that are to be lessened by normalizing are those that cause type 4 creep damage. In particular, Claims 1, 6, 9, 14, 20 and 24 are amended to recite "the base metal is further subjected to a normalizing one or more times in addition to the heat treatment and before the welding to reduce, at former austenite grain boundaries of the welded component, an amount of **coarse carbides that cause creep damage of type 4** relative to an amount of the coarse carbides that would occur in the welded component in the absence of the normalizing". Thus, the rejection over EP-026 should be withdrawn.

Claims 1-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. To obviate the rejection, Claims 1, 6, 9, 14, 20 and 24 are amended.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request favorable consideration and prompt allowance of the application.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is necessary in order to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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